

SOME YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WHITE HOUSE

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Part V—The Buchanan-Lincoln Administrations.

WHEN little Harriet Lane, of Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, was left an orphan at the early age of nine years, rather than live with any other relative she unhesitatingly elected to go to the home of her uncle, James Buchanan. Now, that rather stern gentleman was not particularly fond of children, added to which he was at that period very actively immersed in politics and could give scant attention to the domestic side of life. But, on the other hand, he recollected that he always had been attracted toward this dainty-mannered, open-countenanced child; had thought her eyes as a baby the prettiest blue eyes he had ever seen; had thought that if he *did* ever become so foolish as to adopt a young person he should like to have small Harriet or a girl just like her. However, the keen lawyer, used as he was to rendering quick decisions in commercial and legal matters, hesitated a long while before deciding the present question.

Perhaps it was the expressed preference of Harriet's to abide with him that pleased the troubled gentleman and finally turned the balance in her favor. Anyhow, she was brought to his bachelor home in Lancaster, and formally installed as a fixed charge under the supervision of "Miss Hetty," the prim spinster of no other chronicled name, who for more than forty long years cooked, dusted and swept, ironed and polished for the master of the house. While Harriet and Miss Hetty managed to get along very well together, the newcomer's most congenial company was had in the pres-

ence of a boy cousin close to her own age. James Buchanan Henry he was called when he attained to the dignity of manhood's estate, but to Harriet he was simply "Jimmy," always full of fun and good spirits, kind and considerate of others. Like Harriet, this boy had lost his parents, and like her, too, he had been given a home with his Uncle James.

Naturally, it took some time for the two adults of the house at Lancaster to get used to the strange sounds that echoed through the silence-encrusted apartments and set the strained atmosphere to pulsating—the sounds of care-free, happy young voices, of a rounded whistled note from Jimmy, or of a snatch of song from Harriet, of a merry laugh from both, or of the careless trip of hastily-planted little feet spanning the hall or traversing the library floor. Yes, it took time to get accustomed to these things; indeed, a very long time for Miss Hetty, who on spring days, invariably associated the noise of Jimmy's shoes, scuffling across the portico, with mud, mops, brooms and a pail of cleansing water.

Still, as time wore on, the orphaned cousins became very dear to James Buchanan, as they did to each other. The lawyer might not have acknowledged publicly that he had done a wise thing in taking Harriet and Jimmy under his wing, but in his heart he had no fault to find with himself for so doing.

The boy and girl were sent away to school; and about the time that Harriet had finished her course her uncle purchased the fine estate of

Wheatlands, which was located just beyond Lancaster. Here the family moved, taking possession of the spacious brick house that had a background of woodland, and was prettily shaded by magnificent oaks, elms and larches.

At this home Harriet Lane started in on an almost ideal young womanhood, taking much interest in the laying out of the grounds, in selecting and arranging the furnishings of the dwelling to the greatest convenience and comfort of the lawyer, in doing much church-work, and in ministering to the needs of the neighboring poor. She daily read aloud to her uncle, and talked with him on the topics of the day, discussing matters of law and politics in a manner that showed her deep insight into these unfeminine subjects. She grew up accustomed to society, for owing to his political prominence the master of the house had many distinguished guests; and after his appointment by President Polk as Secretary of State, she did much traveling to Washington, Philadelphia, Pittsburg and New York, sometimes going to Virginia.

Miss Harriet's popularity of course brought her hosts of friends and admirers; but we are told that she remained "wonderfully fancy-free" until one season, at Bedford Springs, she met a young Baltimorean fresh from college. Subsequent events show that at this meeting the spark of love was kindled, although apparently neither of the young people so vitally concerned was aware of the fact for some time to come.

Not long after this Mr. Buchanan was given the office of Ambassador to England, and to that foreign land Miss Harriet presently followed him. There she was paid the most marked attention, being received at court with great deference and entertained by the nobility in a manner so obviously flattering that it would have turned the head of most girls and spoiled them. But the diplomatist's companion was too staid and sensible a little American to let these honors anæsthetize her seri-

ous purposes of life. She accepted the attentions showered upon her with becoming *sang froid* and modesty, exhibiting at all times the native courtesy and rare gentleness of approach which characterized her address all through her days, were she in the presence of a nobleman or the poorest of his subjects.

In speaking of one of her informal calls upon the royal family, she writes in part as follows:

We have dined with the Queen. Her invitations are always short, but graciously worded. As the court is in mourning and I had no black dress, one day's notice—all we were given—kept me very busy. The Queen is a dear lady, and talked a great deal to me about myself and our own good country. She seemed particularly interested in American girls, asking if they were all like me (Oh, dear! how embarrassing) and saying she thought she would enjoy a trip to the United States. Uncle sat upon her right hand. Prince Albert was quite talkative, and altogether we spent a delightful evening. The Princess Royal came in after dinner. She is simple, unaffected and very child-like. Her confiding manner is most captivating to one, and we thought her very charming.

It was not until the fall of 1855 that Harriet Lane came back to America—came back to meet her first grief in the death of her only sister, who died on the far-away shores of the Pacific. Although separated since early childhood, the bond of sisterhood and parentless sympathy had been strong between the two girls. And following closely on the heels of this, the sad young lady received intelligence of the loss of a brother to whom she was also tenderly attached.

The double affliction preyed heavily upon her spirits, and the quiet girl that accompanied the fifteenth president to his seat in the White House was very unlike the happy, buoyant one who only a year before had crossed the sea to visit and socially conquer a strange country. Her grief gripped tightly into her heart tendrils, abating but little as the months and years rolled on, and undoubtedly to its presence may be attributed the cause for the statement rendered by a biographer in referring to her life at Washington. He says: "She possessed an elegant repose of manner, back of which was a subdued softness, undefinable, but

leading one to think of tears and beautiful things beyond the vision."

Now, however, was Miss Harriet's opportunity to repay her kind uncle for some of the good things he had done for her, and gladly and most willingly she performed every duty that presented itself to her questful eyes. Many of these tasks she found distasteful and onerous, for the administration was a strangely trying one in spite of its smooth surface conditions; yet she neither complained nor faltered, but went bravely ahead, looking after her attendants, directing and playing the hostess at all public receptions, and assisting Mr. Buchanan in many business matters, as well as aiding him to entertain his numerous informal callers and personal friends. Among the latter was the Prince of Wales, who remained the guest of the administration for a period of five days, as he left presenting his fair hostess with portraits of all his royal family.

As I have hinted, the regime was one of internal quietude. At its close it became one of open uncertainty and even of apprehension, owing to important questions of slavery which then came up for consideration. War clouds threatened, and the president, who favored the demands of the Southern Rights Party, was subjected to much criticism from the north. Therefore, we may imagine that it was with almost a sigh of relief that uncle and niece left the White House at the expiration of the term. In spite of the censure the former had received for his attitude toward slavery, the journey from Washington to Lancaster was identified with ovations at almost every stop of the train, and ex-President Buchanan and Harriet felt that after all a legion of friends remained loyal to them. As they drove up to the door at Wheatlands, the Lancaster Home Guards escorted them, and a band played "Home, Sweet Home."

It was a heart-feeling home-coming truly, but one that was needed to strengthen the old man's troubled mind during the dark days of carnage

and bloodshed that followed, when the brother of the north sought the brother of the south, a stern light in his eye and a gun in his hand. Ah! those long weeks and months of warfare will never be forgotten by this nation, much less by the man who there at Wheatlands bemoaned the fate that had placed him in a position whereby his word might have helped to bring on the terrible calamity. He had acted to the best of his judgment, but the sequel had been to question that judgment, and he prayed often through the wearing period for such forgiveness as he merited. At these times of doubt and remorse, Harriet ever was his sustaining and comforting earth-angel, freely and unselfishly devoting every effort to the peace and happiness of her benefactor. But when the war ended and her uncle had become much lighter-spirited, she was to be kept no longer as Miss Harriet Lane.

So one winter's day the old brick house blossomed with flowers and shone with cheery, blazing fires; while sleigh-loads of merry folk, young and old, came to see the pretty mistress of Wheatlands become the bride of the young college man she had met in Baltimore years before. Henry Elliott Johnson had not forgotten that first sight of Miss Harriet, nor had Miss Harriet forgotten him, although tempted at different times with riches and titles.

In course of time a child was born to the happy couple. The baby was named after the ex-president, who thus wrote to his "daughter and son":

"I sincerely and ardently pray for your boy long life, happiness and prosperity, and that he may become a wise and useful man, under the blessing of Providence, in his day and generation. Much will depend on his early and Christian training. Be not too indulgent, nor make him too much of an idol."

The letter containing this reference to his little namesake was indited only a few months before the "Sage of Wheatlands" succumbed to the dread

ailment that had troubled him for a number of years.

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THE four children of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln were christened Robert, Edward, William and Thomas—good, plain names, all of them, typical of the temperament of the good, plain man who helped to bestow them.

Of these lads, Edward died in infancy, but the remaining three lived to become illustrious boys of the White House, and as such we must deal with them. Robert Lincoln was considerably older than his younger surviving brothers, and was away at school a great deal of the time during those Springfield days just before the war. His first education was really had at Phillip's Exeter Academy and the finishing touches at Harvard. So he was scarcely an inmate of the Executive Mansion, for which reason it is beyond the province of this article to touch much upon his life.

In some ways William seems to have been the lily of the Lincoln family garden. He was delicate, more frail than either Robert or Thomas, quite feminine in his tastes and endowed with peculiarly winning ways. As a baby two years old, he evinced a strong leaning toward art by the interest that he manifested in looking at several old picture books handed down from Robert's nursery days. Then, too, he liked to listen to his father's enchanting stories, especially as he grew older and could understand their full depth. He became a studious lad, with a pronounced literary bent, and possessed his father's sense of humor to a marked extent.

Thomas, on the other hand, was not very much inclined toward books, and always preferred a good romp out of doors or a jaunt across the fields. His christian name early became quite obsolete to Mr. Lincoln who gave him the pet appellation of "Tadpole" and fondly used it until it became contracted to "Taddie" and finally to

"Tad." Ever afterward William was Tad to him and to Mrs. Lincoln, Taddie.

The boys, Willie and Tad, were about ten and seven years of age, respectively, when their dear father was elected president of the United States. How proud they were of the great honor conferred upon him by his countrymen! Little chaps they were of course, but they were bright boys with a keen appreciation for the honorable, and when the intelligence of their parent's success as a candidate was first brought to the home it is said that the mother's kiss of congratulation was preceded by two others, each on a different cheek and given with all the smacking might of two pairs of boys' lips.

It was in the famous old White House that Willie began to pore over his first pretentious books, under the supervision of Mrs. Lincoln. He liked poetry, even going so far as to attempt the composition of verse by himself, and his descendants of today treasure many unpretentious examples of the little lad's ambitions along this line. One of these efforts, called forth by the death of Colonel Baker, whom Willie greatly admired, was written after much mental labor and sent by its small author to the editor of the *National Republican*. It was duly published, and I here reproduce it:

LINES ON THE DEATH OF COLONEL EDWARD BAKER.

There was no patriot like Baker,
 So noble and so true;
 He fell as a soldier on the field,
 His face to the sky of blue.

His voice is silent in the hall
 Which oft his presence graced;
 No more he'll hear the loud acclaim
 Which rung from place to place.

No squeamish notions filled his breast,
 The Union was his theme;
 "No surrender and no compromise,"
 His day thought and night's dream.

His country has her part to pay
 To'rds those he has left behind;
 His widow and his children all
 She must always keep in mind.

Of course this little verse-eulogy was composed during the progress of the Civil War, directly following the

battle at Ball's Bluff, in 1861, where Colonel Baker, a senator from Oregon the preceding year, fell mortally wounded.

No one suspected that this child-exponent of liberty and the Union was never to see the glorious end of the war and the victory of the cause which he so valiantly espoused with his childish pencil. But so it was to be. He died, wilted like the frail flower that he was, as the result of pneumonia contracted through riding his pony in inclement weather. A relentless fever sapped his strength, day by day he grew more listless and wan, till at last the gentle spirit fled, and the pretty brown head lay on God's pillow of earth below his souging grasses and garmenting leaves.

It was a severe blow to them all, particularly so to the mother whose heart was owned by the sweet-dispositioned boy. Poor grief-stricken soul, she no longer could bear to see about her the playthings of her child, and gave them all away. Thus went his little suits of clothes, his favorite books, his penciled poems, his sack of marbles and other boyish possessions. She never could be prevailed upon, either, to enter the chamber where he died, nor the Blue Room where he had lain in his casket.

Several years afterward, President Lincoln was reading Shakespeare's "King John" to a military friend, and closed with Constance's pathetic remark:

"And, Father Cardinal, I have heard
That we shall see and know our friends
in Heaven.
If that be true I shall see my boy again."

As he finished, the president looked up at his friend and said: "Colonel, did you ever dream of a lost friend and have a feeling that you were holding sweet communion with that friend, and yet have a sad consciousness that it was not a reality? Just so I dream of my boy Willie."

And then, overcome by emotion, the splendid man dropped his head on the table and sobbed aloud.

After the death of his brother, Tad it seemed, became a greater favorite with his father than ever. He was allowed many privileges heretofore denied him, and ran freely in and out of the public offices. He was afflicted with an impediment in his speech, but this appeared to endear him only the more to his parents, and it may have been the reason that he was not sent to school and his education so neglected. For it is a matter of history that Tad did not learn to read until *after* the family left Washington.

He was an odd little fellow in many ways, very affectionate but a trifle obstinate, very tender hearted on most occasions but sometimes a little selfish about unexpected things. Above all he was fun-loving and mischievous, often playing pranks on his father which would have sorely taxed the patience of a less devoted and good-natured parent.

In an unoccupied apartment of the mansion he fitted up a miniature theatre, with stage, curtain, orchestra-pit and boxes. He was very proud of this affair when at length it was completed, and invited all his little friends in to see it. One day, shortly afterward, he was made highly indignant to find the room taken possession of by the photographer, who had come to make some stereoscopic views of the drama contrivance. Getting the men out in the hall by a ruse, Master Tad locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Coaxing and pleading on the part of the photographers was of no avail with the resolute lad. They importuned him to let him get their apparatus, which had been left in the apartment, but Tad was obdurate.

"You have no business in my room, and shall not go in even to get your things," he declared, with snapping eyes.

President Lincoln was soon sought out by the nonplused photographers. "Tad, go and unlock the door for these gentlemen," commanded the President, with some severity.

But Tad rebelliously walked off to his mother's chamber, where his fa-

ther sought him and presently returned with the key.

"Tad is a peculiar child," he explained, "and I must apologize for him. He was violently excited when I went in to him. I said, 'Tad, do you know you are making your father a great deal of trouble and humiliating him?' He burst into tears, instantly giving me the key."

This little lad was always Mr. Lincoln's companion on his trips down the Potomac, and was beside him, clinging to his broad hand, when the President made his enthusiastic entry into Richmond. That was an occasion that Tad was not likely to forget very soon, but there was also another incident to impress itself on his mind—one far less to his liking. Under ordinary circumstances, boy-like, he would have enjoyed the sight of a conflagration, but it was quite another matter when the White House stables burned and with them his father's horses and his own precious ponies. Miserable as a lad well could be, Tad spent some time crying over the misfortune, then slowly brightened up.

When Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated the second time, in 1865, it is said that a brilliant star was seen in the heavens at noonday. This phenomenon was taken later as an augury of the glorious peace that before long descended on the war-heaving land, but few guessed its import at the time of its appearance. It was surely a joyful moment for the president when hostilities were at last annulled and he realized that black slavery was a thing of the past in the United States of America.

On the morning of Good Friday, President Lincoln said to Captain Robert, who had returned with his command to Washington:

"Well, my son, you have returned safely from the front, and now you must lay aside your uniform and return to college. I wish you to read law for three years, and at the end of that time I hope we will be able to tell whether or not you will make a lawyer."

That memorable night the assassin's merciless bullet laid low our country's honored executive, stilling his great heart, bereaving his family and plunging a nation into universal sorrow. Robert arose manfully to the occasion, but poor little Tad was nearly frantic with grief. For hours and hours he crouched at the foot of his mother's bed, his face buried in the coverings and his sobs coming inconso-lably.

But when the Easter sun broke forth in beautiful splendor on Sunday morning there seemed something in it to bring him a ray of comfort. Of a friendly caller he asked: "Do you think my father has gone to Heaven?"

"I am sure your father must have gone there," was the answer.

Tad's eyes, grown wistful, brightened.

"I'm glad he has gone to Heaven," he said, in his halting, imperfect way. "He will be happier there, because he never was very happy since we came here. The war hurt him so."

He tried to dry his tears and succeeded, but for a long time there were occasions when his voice would break in speaking of the departed parent and he would have to resolutely close his mouth. Poor Tad, he had lost not only a good father in the death of President Lincoln, but he also had lost a big, sympathetic chum. That comes hard on any boy, as one lad found out.

Five weeks after the burial of Mr. Lincoln the survivors of his family left the White House. They settled down in a hotel at Hyde Park, a suburb of Chicago. It was a great change, but necessity knows no law, and they were far from rich. A pension was finally granted the widow, but the nation's allowance seemed almost like a mockery, for Mrs. Lincoln, sad and troubled, lost her reason and had to be put under the care of guardians. Doubtlessly, a factor that greatly hastened her unfortunate condition was the death of Tad, at eighteen, who went as he said, "to join father and Willie in Heaven."